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FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4419  
INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 0772  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0174  
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0141  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 1787

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT MORESBY 000175

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FOR EAP/ANP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/20/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CASC](#) [BP](#)  
SUBJECT: HONIARA STABILIZED - SOLOMON ISLANDS STILL A MESS

REF: A) CANBERRA 577 B) PORT MORESBY 170

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Fitts, Ambassador, AMB, STATE.  
REASON: 1.4 (b)

1.(C) SUMMARY: Australian troops deployed in the early hours of April 20, restoring order to Honiara. None of the American community of 70 has elected to leave Honiara. With much of the business infrastructure destroyed by the rioting, the city will now face problems with food and other supplies. Solomon Islands' modest modern sector was largely owned by the Chinese targeted in the riots. It is unclear how many will stay and rebuild. However, it is clear that, while almost three years of the large-scale Australian-led intervention (RAMSI) had stabilized the situation, Solomon society remains riven by fissures that cannot yet be bridged by democratic institutions. END SUMMARY

2.(SBU) Some 180 Australian troops and police arrived in Honiara April 19 (ref A). Resident Americans tell us that troops did not deploy to the areas affected by rioting until the late hour and general exhaustion had quieted the havoc. Thus, further violent confrontation was averted. Order has been restored on Honiara's burnt out streets and we understand that some Chinese residents now feel safe enough to survey the damage. A dusk to dawn curfew is in effect in Honiara. There have been no reports of any violence outside the city or elsewhere in Solomon Islands.

3.(SBU) The damage in Honiara is extensive, according to long-term observers exceeding anything in the 1998-2003 ethnic strife that led to the RAMSI intervention. With most stores looted and burned, authorities are now concerned that there could be shortages of food, fuel and other supplies. We understand that for this reason, diplomatic missions are proposing to withdraw dependants.

4.(U) The Chinese residents that were the immediate target of the rioting own most of the business establishments in Honiara and a large part of those nationwide. Damage to the retail sector and light industry, and the closely associated homes of the owners, is extensive. Even if all of the owners elect to remain and rebuild, the economy has been dealt a serious setback.

5.(SBU) We have polled the American community in Honiara and none have elected to depart despite offers of transportation on both Australian and New Zealand military aircraft.

6.(SBU) Political leaders in both factions are now meeting with their respective supporters, not with each other. Neither side is taking any steps or issuing any statements designed to cool the situation. Though the rioters are exhausted and the looters looted out, passions have been vented not healed.

7.(C) COMMENT: Almost three years ago, the arrival of 2200

troops and police under RAMSI restored order after five years of increasing ethnic strife. This week, the addition of 180 to the 220 police already in country did the trick. Perhaps that should be seen as progress. However, it is now clear that the intervention merely stabilized the situation. Despite large-scale Australian assistance and intensive institution building, Solomon Island democratic institutions clearly cannot cope with the deep fissures and frustrations that divide the many communities in its society. A strong outside hand will be needed for a long, long time.

FITTS